



BUILDING-STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM

NYS OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION
& HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
(518) 474-0479

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

UNIQUE SITE NO. _____
QUAD _____
SERIES _____
NEG. NO. _____

YOUR NAME: Cynthia Howk DATE: Dec., 1994
133 S. Fitzhugh St.
YOUR ADDRESS: Rochester, NY 14608 TELEPHONE: 546-7029

ORGANIZATION (if any): The Landmark Society of Western New York, Inc.

IDENTIFICATION

1. BUILDING NAME(S): former St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church
2. COUNTY: Monroe TOWN/CITY: Greece VILLAGE: ---
3. STREET LOCATION: 2390 Ridge Road West
4. OWNERSHIP: a. public ☐ b. private ☒
5. PRESENT OWNER: Patrick Bassett ADDRESS: _____
6. USE: Original: church Present: retail store(vacant)
7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes ☒ No ☐
Interior accessible: Explain currently vacant

DESCRIPTION

8. BUILDING MATERIAL: a. clapboard ☐ b. stone ☒ c. brick ☐ d. board and batten ☐
e. cobblestone ☐ f. shingles ☐ g. stucco ☐ other: _____
Roof - asphalt shingles. Foundation- fieldstone.
9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: a. wood frame with interlocking joints ☐
(if known) b. wood frame with light members ☐
c. masonry load bearing walls ☒
d. metal (explain) _____
e. other _____
10. CONDITION: a. excellent ☐ b. good ☒ c. fair ☐ d. deteriorated ☐
11. INTEGRITY: a. original site ☒ b. moved ☐ if so, when? _____
c. list major alterations and dates (if known): _____

(see continuation sheet)

12. PHOTO:

13. MAP:

"Here is a nice stone church and it looks quite old, too. Let's make it a 'red minus.' The minus is for the modern roof that is awfully dominant (visually) and the alterations of the windows (removed decorative glass)." P.Malo.

COLOR CODE

Red minus



14. THREATS TO BUILDING: a. none known ☐ b. zoning ☒ c. roads ☒
d. de elopers ☒ e. deterioration ☐
f. other: currently vacant.
15. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:
a. barn ☐ b. carriage house ☐ c. garage ☐
d. privy ☐ e. shed ☐ f. greenhouse ☐
g. shop ☐ h. gardens ☐
i. landscape features: _____
j. other: paved parking lot
16. SURROUNDINGS OF THE BUILDING (check more than one if necessary):
a. open land ☐ b. woodland ☐
c. scattered buildings ☐
d. densely built-up ☒ e. commercial ☒
f. industrial ☐ g. residential ☐
h. other: elementary school borders site to the east.
large retail mall across the street to the south.
17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:
(Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district)

(see continuation sheet)

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (including interior features if known):

(see continuation sheet)

SIGNIFICANCE

19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: 1875

ARCHITECT: not determined

BUILDER: not determined

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

(see continuation sheet)

21. SOURCES: (see continuation sheet)

22. THEME: former
religious: 19th century church

11c.

The original stained glass windows have been removed from the east and west elevations, c. 1960s-70s.

The original sanctuary interior has been remodeled as commercial space; contemporary partition walls and a drop ceiling were installed, c. 1960s-80s.

The Gothic-arched doorway on the east elevation (original main entrance) has been partially filled-in with contemporary concrete block, c. 1994. The cross on this east entrance gable has been removed (c. 1960s-80s).

The cross on the peak of the south gable (facade) has been removed, c. 1960s-70s.

Two contemporary picture windows have been installed on the facade (south elevation), c. 1970s-80s.

A contemporary exterior awning has been added to the entrance at the northwest corner of the building, c. 1980s-90s.

The slate roof, and decorative cresting (on main and east ridgelines) have been removed and replaced with contemporary asphalt roof shingles, c. 1980s-90s.

The brick chimney on the main north gable has been removed, c. 1960s-80s. Only the brick base and concrete lower section is extant.

The octagonal cupola located on the north gable has been altered; its arched openings have been covered over and the cross located on the peak of the cupola roof has been removed, c. 1960s-80s. Originally, the cupola housed a bell, which was salvaged from the second Monroe County Court House. It is not know if the bell remains in the cupola or has been removed to another location (possibly in the new St. John's the Evangelist Church?).

A smaller cupola on the one-story, gabled rear (north) wing has been removed (base is still visible on the ridgeline), c. 1960s-80s.

A historic photo (c. 1940s?) shows original facade details that have been replaced/altered, probably during the 1952 or 1955 renovation. An oculus window edged in limestone has been installed in the front gable; this window replaces a

11c. continued

rectangular, stone plaque with name/date of church (see historic photo). Also on the facade, a large, pointed-arch window was removed and replaced with a new one-story, gabled entrance that projected from the facade. This new entrance (still extant) was clad in Medina stone with limestone trim and included a decorative, pointed-arch doorway and flanking buttresses topped with limestone cap stones.

17. The former St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church is located on the north side of Ridge Road West. It is situated in the southeast quadrant of the town. The historic, Gothic Revival, stone building faces north onto Ridge Road, a busy four-lane highway. This building is located in one of the most densely developed commercial areas in the county. To the east and north of the former church is the 9+-acre campus of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, with its 1964 church, contemporary rectory, 1950s school, and large paved parking lot. To the west of the building is a paved parking lot and the former rectory (now a commercial building). The surrounding neighborhood along Ridge Road is commercial with The Mall at Greece Ridge Center across the street to the south.

18. This former church is a two-story, gable-roofed, Medina sandstone Gothic Revival building constructed in 1875. The building is comprised of a rectangular main block with a one-story, gabled north (rear) wing. The entire building is constructed of random-laid blocks of Medina sandstone with limestone trim. Fenestration is regular and repetitive with narrow, rectangular, pointed-arch windows on the east and west elevations. These narrow windows have stone sills and arches. The facade has an oculus window in the front gable (installed c. 1950s) and two contemporary (c. 1970s-80s) picture windows. All of the original stained glass has been removed from the window openings and replaced with contemporary clear and frosted glass. Two windows on the west elevation have been filled-in with contemporary concrete block. The oculus facade window is boarded over.

The facade features a one-story, projecting entrance with gable-roofed, Gothic-arched entrance (trimmed with limestone) and two false buttresses with limestone caps. The walls of this projecting entrance are also clad with randomly laid Medina sandstone, however, the stone blocks are more regular

18. continued

in appearance than the rough-cut stones in the 1875 building. This projecting entrance porch and the oculus gable window appear to have been constructed in the 1950s (per historic photo).

The east and west elevations feature one-story buttresses with rough-faced, limestone caps, set at an angle. The original main entrance is located in the one-story gabled bay on the east elevation. This entrance is now partially filled-in with contemporary concrete block.

The large, octagonal, wood cupola remains on the ridgeline of the church, near the north gable. A smaller cupola has been removed from the ridgeline of the one-story north wing; its base remains extant.

The building, converted for commercial use, is currently vacant. The original interior sanctuary space has been subdivided and remodeled for commercial use by means of partition walls and a drop ceiling. It is not known to what extent any of the original interior details (large wood wood beams, etc.) survive underneath the contemporary partitions.

20. Built in 1875, the original St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church is architecturally significant as a major example of late-19th-century, Gothic Revival religious architecture in the town of Greece. Although the building has undergone some changes, its basic form and much of its historic design/materials are still intact. Together with the former Our Mother of Sorrows Church, it is one of only two surviving masonry-constructed, 19th-century churches in the town. This building is the only historic church of stone construction that survives in Greece. It is also architecturally significant on a regional basis: few 19th-century rural churches in this area were constructed with this type of sandstone masonry. Historically, the building is significant for its association with the development of the Catholic church and the late-19th century growth in this south/central part of the town.

Buildings of the Gothic Revival style in the United States were designed principally between the 1840s and the 1870s. There are, however, earlier local examples, such as St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Rochester, which was built in

20. continued

1823. The Gothic Revival was considered part of the picturesque movement of design, originating in England. The use of Medieval style elements, such as pointed-arch windows, buttresses, and battlements was common.

Gothic Revival was in declining favor for American domestic buildings after 1865. However, the High Victorian Gothic phase of architectural design of the 1870s was principally applied to public and religious buildings. Constructed in 1875, the former St. John the Evangelist Church is an vernacular example of this later era of Gothic Revival architecture.

Some of the details that are characteristic of the Gothic Revival style are shown on this church: pointed-arch windows and doorways, steeply-pitched roof, and the use of contrasting colors of stone (red/brown Medina stone walls with light gray limestone trim). By the mid-1860s, significant population growth had occurred in the area known as "Greece Center." The Civil War was over, and a man named Johnson had been thrust accidentally into the White House. In Spring, 1865, the Catholic families along the Ridge prepared to dedicate their new parish, St. John the Evangelist.

In its earliest days, Ridge Road was an Indian trail from the Genesee to the Niagara River. As early as 1800 the trail had become a road in at least that portion from the Genesee River to Parma Corners. In 1812, the road was cut through for the transportation of soldiers and war materials from Fort Oswego to Fort Niagara.

By the beginning of the 1830s, a large influx of immigration from Europe was underway. To Greece came many families from Germany, Holland, and Ireland. When Bishop John Hughes, the Archbishop of New York, whose diocese embraced all of this state, came on a Episcopal visitation in 1841 he reported:

"Seven miles from Rochester is the township of Greece, settled to a very considerable extent by Catholics. They have not had at all times the undivided attention of any clergyman, although one of the first measures adopted by them after settlement in the place was to secure the erection of a neat and appropriate church in which now they have regular service every Sunday."

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This parish was Our Mother of Sorrows founded in 1829. It served all of Greece until 1865 when Rev. John Maurice, pastor of the old church at Paddy Hill, organized the new mission at what was known as Greece-Post Office. The area was but a crossroads along the land route west, the Ridge Road.

Rev. Maurice was instrumental in founding three of the area's parishes: first was Our Mother of Sorrows, then Holy Cross in Charlotte, and, finally, St. John the Evangelist (his own namesake and the third figure of the crucifixion triptych). The Daniel Sharpe, Peter Morrison, Henry Burrow and John Straub families were among the twenty pioneer families of St. John's.

Father Maurice purchased the property known as the "Rowe Tavern" for \$2800. This old inn was the first frame building in the town of Greece and was located on the site of the former rectory (now commercial building) to the west. The tavern dated back to 1810.

After the tavern was remodeled for use as a temporary church, Mass was first offered on May 6, 1865. The building was dedicated on May 22, 1865 by Bishop John Timon of Buffalo, since Greece was then in the Diocese of Buffalo. The 1872 county map shows this ell-plan building marked "R.C. Church" on the north side of Ridge Road, just east of School No. 3 and the Baptist Church (on the northeast corner of Long Pond Road).

This church was used for 10 years until the second church (this stone building) was built in 1875.

After the Civil War, the area had grown considerably and the Buffalo Diocese had been divided to form a new diocese. The Rev. Bernard J. McQuaid from New Jersey was installed in 1869 as Rochester's first bishop. During Bishop McQuaid's tenure, a vast complex of institutions, seminaries, parishes, and especially parochial schools in the area were constructed.

One of his church dedications was the second church of St. John's in Greece on September 15, 1875. Father Thomas Hendrick was pastor. The Journal newspaper described the church as "a fine imposing structure 38 feet wide by 84 feet long. It was Anglo-Gothic style and its total cost was a 'very staggering' \$6,000.00." The first resident pastor of

20. continued

St. John's was the Rev. Frederick Rauber, appointed in 1876.

The first formal school was opened at St. John's in 1881 and was located in the basement of the church. It enrolled 34 children. There were financial problems and teacher problems even then. But Bishop McQuaid ordered a school to be built and the first building was completed in 1890. The Sisters of St. Joseph were the resident teachers. They lived in a frame house behind the church.

The old tavern/church was used as a rectory on its original site, just to the west of the new stone church. When fire destroyed the tavern across the street in the early 1880s, the proprietor, W.F. Gentile, sought to buy and move the parish house to this location. As the building was originally a "stage-stop" on the Ridge, it appeared an appropriate and economical move. However, negotiations broke down over the price. A committee of Messrs. Straub, Burrow, Richardson, Marion, Volkmar, and Freedman finally settled on a price of \$1,000 and Mr. Gentile removed the building to the south side of the road (where it remained into the 1960s).

Father Hargarther subsequently began construction of a permanent rectory (which was used as a priests' residence into the 1960s).

In 1886, a bell was installed in the rear cupola (belfry); the bell was donated by Adam Volkmar. He purchased it from the Board of Supervisors of Monroe County after it was found among rubbish in the basement of the Court House. Its location remained a mystery for many years until 1920, when the Rev. Sebastian Englerth reported that the bell which had summoned tardy lawyers to their court sessions as far back as 1821 was now calling people to Mass in Greece. The bell had not been sold for junk, as many had believed, but had been presented to the church as an act of thanksgiving by Mr. Adam Volkmar for having been rescued at sea from a sinking ship.

He was on a 49-day crossing from Germany to America in November, 1854, when his ship, the "New Era" sank in an Atlantic storm off Sandy Hook. He survived by clinging to the mast and rigging until rescued. His heartfelt gratitude was further marked by the picture of a three-masted sailing ship depicted in a stained glass window, that was installed in the 1875 church building.

20. continued

The Ridge Road saw many changes over the years. The era of stage coaches brought much prosperity along the road. The Erie Canal, however, and later the railroad, diverted travel elsewhere. Automobiles restored fame and popularity for a while to the "Honeymoon Trail," only to give way again to the New York State Thruway.

During the height of the railroad era, several hamlets developed in Greece but the one on Ridge Road near St. John's seemed by-passed. One growing area was called Coldwater to the southwest of Ridge Road, where a mission church was organized under the care of the pastor from St. John's.

An old parish journal from 1895 contains this report from the pastor:

"In November, a fair was held for the benefit of the church. There was a buggy contest for the men; a contest for the collection of photographs of all former pastors of the parish for the ladies; a contest for a chest of tools and a handsome doll for the boys and girls of the school. There was music every evening by musicians from Charlotte, Spencerport, and Rochester. Five carry-alls, and a number of private conveyances were engaged to bring visitors, free of charge, from the electric cars on Lake Avenue. Over 500 people attended. Mrs. Fred Straub had the highest number of votes and carried home the handsome frame containing the collection of photographs of St. John's pastors to date; Willie Knipper was ahead of all competitors and carried off the tool chest; Miss Ida Pringle secured the doll. The buggy contest was close with John King, the victor."

At the turn of the century, the hamlet on the Ridge could boast little more than Joseph Paille's blacksmith shop, W.H. Anderson's General Store and C. W. Voshall's "Big Elm Stock Farm." In 1901, the Rev. John F. Boppel was appointed pastor (he was subsequently Chancellor of the Diocese). During his eight years at St. John's the parish debt was cleared.

The 1902 shows the hamlet as "Ada," with St. John's Church at the eastern edge of the hamlet. The church property consisted of the stone church, a frame rectory to the west, a frame school to the east and three, large frame carriage sheds to the north. One of the means of income were the two

20. continued

turned into a flood-tide of young home owners. The original 20 families of 1865 grew to 400 in 1949 and 1500 in 1959. Parochial school enrollment reached 1001 in 1955. In 1949 and eight-room addition replaced the oldest school building; in 1953, the rest of the old wooden school was demolished and a modern brick structure of eight more rooms and an auditorium was built.

In response to the rapidly growing size of the parish, a second full time assistant was added in 1958 to St. John's staff with the arrival of Rev. Lawrence Murphy.

The 1959 county map shows the St. John's campus with a 9.5-acre site containing the stone church, frame rectory, and convent and large school. A large parking lot and open land were located to the north of these buildings (all situated close to Ridge Road).

The vitality of the church was indicated by the new parishes opened up by the people of St. John's in the last 35 years. In 1959, the new St. Lawrence parish was established out of the western section of St. John's. In June, 1964, Holy Name of Jesus parish began with the eastern portion of St. John's and parts of St. Charles and Sacred Heart.

The 1875 stone church building on the Ridge had become completely inadequate for the needs of St. John's parish. A school addition in 1955 provided an auditorium as a Sunday chapel. From Christmas, 1954 to November 15, 1964, the growing numbers of new members endured the hard kneelers, folding chairs, and oppressive heat in this school chapel. The three parish priest began a ten-Mass Sunday schedule with sermons in two locations. With the help of the Seminaries and the Basilian Fathers from Aquinas, the life of the parish continued in this "distressed" situation until Bishop Kearney gave permission to start the new St. John's Church building.

Sensing the need to draw the congregation - divided into two chapels - together "around an altar," Rev. Donald E. Lux planned a church unique in the area. Rochester architect, James W. Johnson (also designed the Liberty Pole) was commissioned by Bishop Kearney to draw up plans for a church that would accommodate the growing population, serve the liturgical needs (including the new tenants of worship from the Second Vatican Council of 1962), and still stay within the financial level appropriate to the parish.

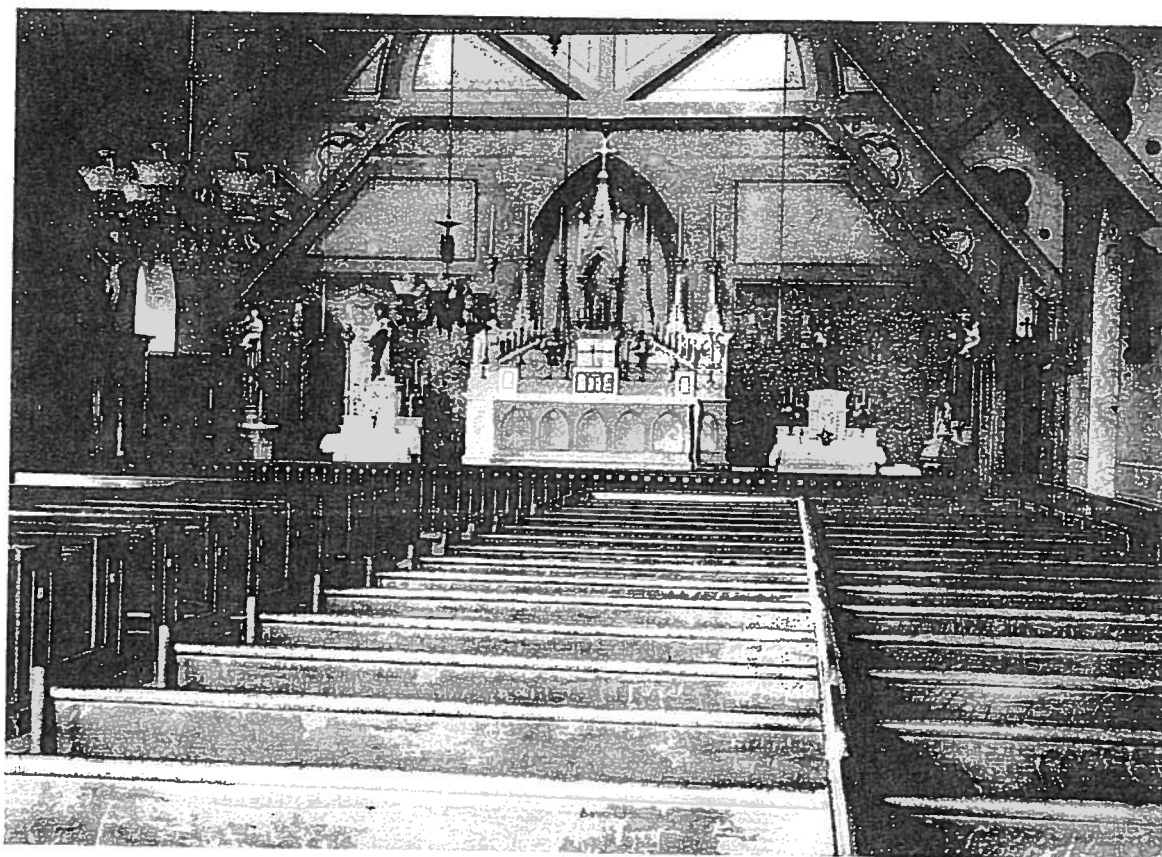
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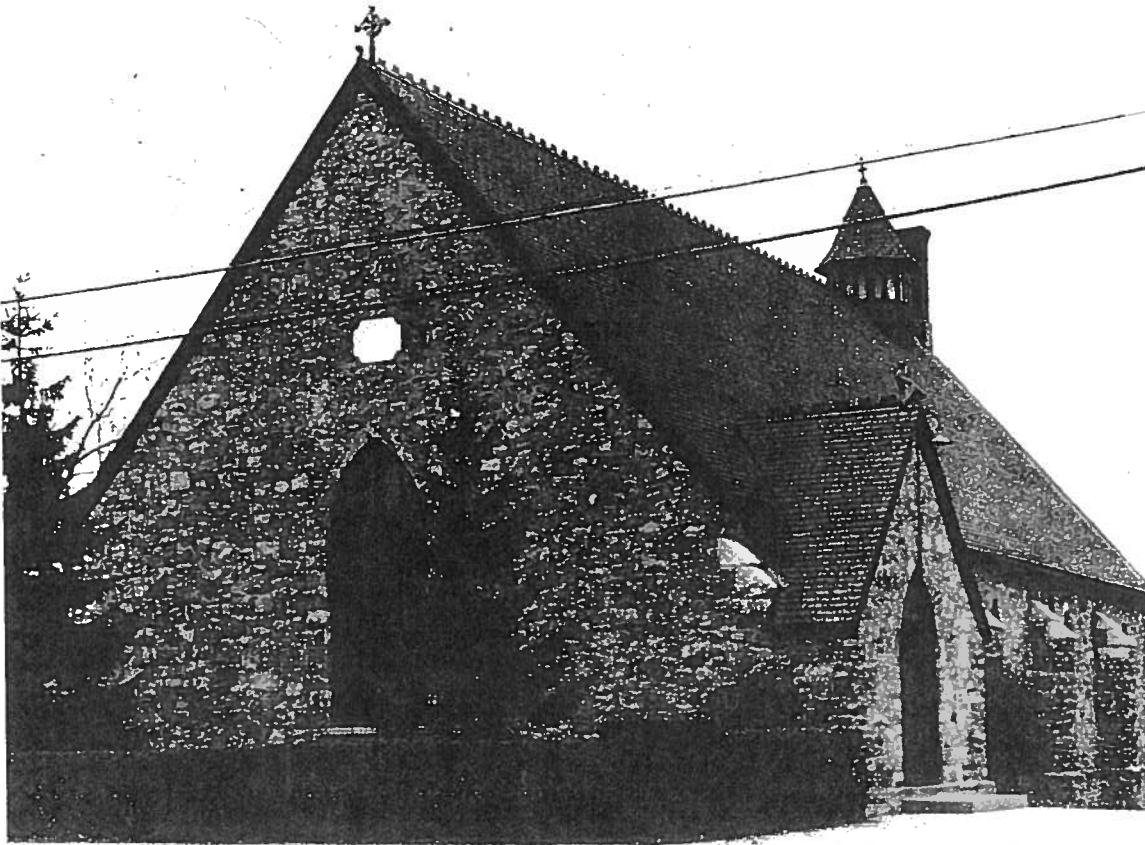
Ground-breaking ceremonies for the new church building were held on May 6, 1963. The difficult work of building the wood forms and pouring concrete to a 100-foot level continued through the hot summer. On Sunday afternoon, September 15, 1963, Bishop Kearney added another building stone to his imposing record of new sanctuaries. He commended the member of St. John's for the building of "this beautiful cathedral." The ceremony coincided with the 88th anniversary of the dedication of the second church - September 15, 1875. The first mass in the new church was on November 7, 1964.

In recent years, the former church building was converted into commercial use and sold to a private owner. During the 1980s-'90s, a piano and organ store was located here. It was succeeded by the Rosa & Sullivan appliance store. Currently, the building is vacant and available for lease.

21. See final report for bibliography; historic files of St. John the Evangelist Church and their 1965 church history, "So Great A Work - St. John The Evangelist Church, Greece New York * 1865-1965" by the Rev. Daniel P. Tormey.



Photograph of sanctuary of St. John the Evangelist Church, 2390 Ridge Rd. West (date - early-1900s?); note gas chandelier, altar, ceiling beams with trefoil cut-out designs.
From "So Great A Work: St. John the Evangelist Church, Greece, NY 1865-1965."



St. John's second church building, dedicated in 1875.

2390 Ridge Road West, Greece, NY

carpets beaten, and laid again over clean fresh straw. What fun for the children to walk over the springy surface before it became packed down, and woe to the unwary toe which was sometimes stubbed against it! As late as 1890 farmers drove thru the residential section with straw to sell.

Mrs. Mitchell made her own candles, saying she remembered when her own father used flint and tinder to strike a light. She used a mold which made six candles at a time, but Darwin Eldredge describes a different method. His father set a deep iron kettle, which contained some water and tallow, over a fire and as the water became hot, the tallow melted and floated. Strings were cut for wicks and dipped one at a time in the hot tallow. As this cooled it hardened on the string and the candles were dipped until they reached the desired size. The advantage of this method was that one operator could prepare hundreds in the time one could make dozens by the mold method. If not so smoothly made, no doubt they were just as serviceable. The Mitchell's used candles until 1860 or 1861, longer than many families, because they did not consider the whale oil lamps safe. Mr. Mitchell used to read aloud in the evening from the farm paper while his wife sewed or



St. John's first school building, erected in 1890.

- just east of 2390 Ridge Road West (demolish

